

LESSON 9



HUMAN RULE IN THE CHURCH

Scripture Texts: Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 2:11-14

Human beings are a large part of the church. Therefore there must be and is a human side to the government of the church. In this lesson we take a look at what part belongs to men and women and what part is wrong for them to assume. God rules.

Human rule is wrong. Man's part is to carry out the rule of Christ, the Head. Man has no right to provide for ruling bodies in the Church of God with power to place workers, set policies, control procedures, decide beliefs, formulate creeds, etc.

MEMORY VERSE: *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

—John 15:13

The Secret to Greatness

Matthew 20:25-28 **The princes of the Gentiles—earthly rulers—exercise dominion over them . . .** We are all aware of the tendency in human nature to seek for power over others. Dictatorships show something of the extreme to which men tend to go in exercising authority over those in their power. Jesus said, **it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister . . . chief . . . let him be your servant.** The Church of God has no human rulers, only servants. The measure of greatness in the church is the amount of service one gives. The pattern for us in service is the **Son of man**. He came for the one purpose of ministering to sinful man in giving **his life a ransom for many**. The same Spirit must be in us if we perform the part man has been given to do in the church.

We speak of living in the strength of the flesh as carnality. It is the opposite of living after the Spirit of God, or spirituality. Carnal living, when exercised in personal living and work, produces, as far as it reaches, a carnal, worldly church that is not of God, but is dead. When carnality exercises itself in obtaining dominion over others, it produces human rule. We see it in denominational organization. No human ruling body was in Christ's plan for the church. He said, **It shall not be so among you.**

By the Grace of God

First Peter 4:10-11 **As every man hath received the gift—according to the spiritual ability God has given him—even so minister the same one to another.** Everyone in the church is to carry on his work by means of the gifts of the Spirit, not by means of his own natural judgment and planning. Do not make the mistake of trying to use a gift that you do not have. What gift? **The manifold grace of God**, God's power, put into man's hands as a trust. It is to be used in humility, as a servant and not as a lord. If one works in his purely natural strength, his work is cut off from God, like an electric motor with the power line unplugged. **Minister the same one to another.** Ministers spoken of here are not just preachers, but include all saints. Saints are to bless and encourage other saints and work to convert sinners. In 2 Corinthians 4:7 we read that **we have this treasure in earthen vessels**. The only scope of human rule in the church is to provide the earthen vessel in which Christ can place the gift, truly a **treasure. That the excellency**

of the power may be of God, and not of us.

There is a part that man cannot do; there is a part that God will not do, but instead He uses earthen vessels.

If any man speak—not preachers only—**let him speak as the oracles of God**—speak the words God dictates, use the Bible. **If any man minister**—serve in any way—**let him do it as of the ability which God giveth**. Very clear, yet many fail here. Why? Because of a lack of spiritual discernment. Human ideas are brought in and human rule is the outgrowth. God-given abilities must be used **that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ**. Jesus is to have the **dominion for ever and ever**, not men.

Conflicting Spirits

First Corinthians 2:11-14 It is **the spirit of man** in us that understands or feels human nature. It is **the Spirit of God** in us that understands **the things of God**. God wants us to grasp His spiritual blessings. He wants us to **know the things that are freely given to us of God**. To make His people capable of knowing these, He has given them His Spirit. Then they use the wisdom **which the Holy Ghost teacheth** when they speak or act. They do not follow their human thoughts only—**words which man's wisdom teacheth**. This spiritual equipment and its use is necessary to the entire divine mission of the church. Any organization lacking it cannot be the Church of God. **The natural**—unregenerate, unsaved—**man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God**—his mind and heart will not take them in. Not having them, he cannot use them. Therefore if an unconverted person is put by man into a place of service or authority in the church, all he can do is speak **words which man's wisdom teacheth**. That part of God's work is lowered to a human level and ceases to be a part of God's living church. Like a splinter in a finger, it is a foreign body lodged in and plaguing the body of Christ. If such unconverted ones have enough influence to exert a power over other members and work of the church to be **lords over God's heritage** (1 Peter 5:3), then human rule begins and will grow, doing much harm. To lean on man brings no special blessings. Quality is better than quantity.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Christ is the water of life, we are only the cup
in which a drink is passed to others.**

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